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Journal #4: The Good Earth by Pearl S. Buck

**Summary:** At the end of the last chapter it depicted Wang receiving some gold coins from a cowardly rich man. In this chapter he buys seed and an ox so he can return home to his farm with his family. Upon returning home Wang discovers that men have been staying in his house during their absence. An old friend, Ching, informs Wang that these men were to be associated with his uncle. Wang concludes that the damage is not that bad and is excited to be home again. Soon however Wang finds out that O-lan stole some jewelry during the raid in the south. The two agree to sell some of it to buy more land from the slave master. Though, when Wang goes to the house he finds that all the slaves and money had been stolen during a raid. Additionally, the shock of being robbed ended up killing the Old Mistress, also known as the head honcho. Therefore, being the house is in desperate need for money and such Wang gets three hundred acres of their land for a bargain. Additionally, Wang buys more livestock and fixes his house while adding more living space. To help his friend Ching out he buys his land and invites him to live with his family. Moreover, he gives Ching the job to hire more laborers because of all this extra land Wang has. Next thing we know O-lan is pregnant with twins, a boy and a girl, however this time the family is excited for the newborns because they can afford the extra mouths to feed. However, he realizes that his oldest daughter, the one he contemplated selling, is slower than the other children her age. He feels awful for thinking of selling her all those months ago knowing that if he did her owners would have killed her for having a disability. He becomes more attached to her and ends up taking her out to the fields with him. Much time passes in this chapter and it tells of good harvest and surplus of food. Wang sends his two sons off to school because he does not want his children to be illiterate like himself. In the next chapter things turn ugly for Wang because he become restless when a flood hits his land. He has nothing to worry about (because of the past years) so he starts picking on O-lan for looking plain and having unbound feet. O-lan does not get angry at him but is obviously hurt by the comments. Wang then leaves the house and starts spending more time at an expensive tea shop in town. He notices pictures of beautiful women and thinks they are just figments of the imagination. However, upon the realization that they are real women he decides that he wants a young and beautiful girl in his life. He returns to the shop the next day to buy a “session” with a woman, Lotus, and returns every day. This woman changes Wang in a distasteful way. He no longer likes farming and is caught up in looking good and spending his money. Wang is such a pig that he takes O-lan’s jewelry that she had kept so he can give it to this new woman. Wang’s uncle and his family return to the story and move into the house. The uncle’s wife sees the change in Wang and knows that he is seeing another woman and inform O-lan that men with wealth have many wives. After this, Wang ends up buying Lotus and waits anxiously for her arrival. Once again, O-lan fell victim to Wang’s bullying and weeps declaring that she is the one that gave him children and he treats her horribly. Wang builds a separate building for Lotus and has he live there and there he goes every night to have sex with her. When Wang’s father sees Lotus for the first time he calls her a harlot and will not hear any explanation for her presence for he is going crazy. When the children see Lotus for the first time they try to touch her beautiful clothing and she yells harshly at them. Wang is angered by this and does not visit her for a few days, and says he does not love her like he loved her in the beginning. Additionally, O-lan is obviously unhappy in the situation but there is nothing she can do. Wang is no longer obsessed with Lotus so he returns to work in the fields. Wang’s eldest son is doing well in school until he begins to skip class. O-lan connects this behavior to that of the lords when they were ready for a wife. Wang is proud to compare his son to that of a lord and agrees it is time to find their son a wife. He does not want this to be a regular village women so he has Lotus’ servant find a woman in the rich community ready for marriage. However, before she finds a woman Wang finds out that his uncle’s son had taken his son to a prostitute house. Enraged by this he demands his uncle and his family leave. His uncle though has been keeping a secret that he is part of notorious band of robbers which is why Wang’s home has not been raided in the past years. Wang knows that he cannot make his uncle leave or take him to court for the punishment Wang receives will not be worth it. Therefore, Wang does not make them leave and instead gives the wife and son silver to repair the damage. Additionally, the marriage is arranged but they must wait three years until the girl is of age. During this time Wang notices that O-lan’s stomach is large but she is not pregnant. When he asks her about it she states that it hurts but she does not complain and continues to work in the fields. One day, O-lan tells Wang that he sees his eldest son go over to Lotus’ hut, alone. Wang does not believe her so comes home one day unannounced. Upon seeing them in bed together he beats them both and sends his son to a school in the south. No wanting to break the arranged marriage he asks the woman if she will marry his second son who is crafty and intelligent and she agrees. When returning home he finds his daughter getting her feet bound. She is crying because of the pain and tells her father that O-lan told her that if she does not get this done than her future husband will not love her like Wang does not love O-lan. Wang is very distraught at hearing this and feels guilty for all of his actions. He notices that O-lan is walking as though in pain and so he orders a doctor. The doctor concludes that O-lan cannot be saved.

**Analysis:** This section expressed a wide range of emotions. In the beginning, it was very happy for the family was finally able to return home and go back to their lives. Wang was able to have a helping hand towards his friend in his time of need and this lead them to many successful years of harvest. Moreover, his family grows even more with the birth of twins and he is able to support all of his children once again. This part of the book was deceiving because the reader feels great because the family finally gets what they have been yearning for just to have their feelings crushed. Wang becomes evil in the next theme for he is filled with greed. With all this money and success he lashes out at O-lan and is not loyal by sleeping with Lotus. I personally became outraged at this part. The fact that he is so overcome with greed that he goes out and buys a new wife that is more “beautiful” than O-lan is so disrespectful and disheartening. Yes, this kind of behavior is common in other countries it is still awful that women have to go through that pain of sharing a loved one. I view Lotus in an ugly light for being pretty and sleeping with a married man even though I know that this is common. Then the theme makes the reader feel sorry for Wang because he realizes he has made an awful mistake by treating O-lan harshly and favoring Lotus. He begins to show remorse and focuses on his family as his obsession with Lotus fades. It was nice to see Wang focus on his children and send them to school but with the news of his uncle’s secret the story takes a frightening turn. The fact that they have this notorious robber living in their house means that things could go bad at any time. However hearing of the affair between Lotus and Wang’s son honestly made me happy. I felt that she got what she deserved because she was a hoe from the beginning and the reader can tell Wang does not love her like he used to at all. Finally, the end of this section breaks my heart. The fact that O-lan has been suffering for so long and now can no longer be saved is awful. Wang is distressed because he has finally realized that he ruined the only good thing in his life.

**Application:** This is going to come across very feminist but a human characteristic that spans time and culture would be men are pigs. As a young girl you are always warned about men being animals and only doing what they want. This part of the book depicts that very image in the worst way. Wang was bored with his wife of many years who gave him three beautiful children at the time. Therefore, he went to a tea shop, which was more like a whore house in my eyes. He buys himself sessions with this beautiful woman who he knew nothing about and in turn purchases her and builds her a house on his property. You can see this in today society with all the men cheating on their wives or even divorcing and remarrying younger women. It’s a disgusting trait that some men have learned is not attractive. I am not denying the fact that there are some decent guys out there but when looking in the news one will see the pig headed men in the world.

Additionally, in this section Wang sends his two oldest sons to school because he does not want them to be illiterate like himself. I feel that this shows human behavior of a parent always wanting better for their child. In today’s society parents strive to give their children the best education, the newest technology, and a positive environment to live in. The two boys do very well in school because they know how hard their father had to work to get them there.